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SAINT, SINNER, OR SOLDIER-
LIBERATION THEOLOGY AND LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT

A Monograph
by
Major Robert H. Drumm Jr.



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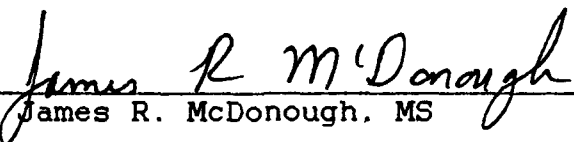
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ABSTRACT

SAINT, SINNER, OR SOLDIER - LIBERATION THEOLOGY AND LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT by MAJ Robert H. Drumm, Jr., USA, 54 pages.

This monograph discusses the Army's Low Intensity Conflict (LIC) doctrine and how it applies to Liberation Theology. Both Operation Urgent Fury and Just Cause demonstrated the potential for conventional combat forces to be thrust into a LIC environment. The recent implication of a US Army major in the murder of six Jesuit priests in El Salvador highlights the need to examine LIC doctrine in the context of Liberation Theology. This study will show that Liberation Theology is an ideological base of support for Central American insurrection. This monograph examines LIC doctrine to determine if it provides the tactical commander with the necessary tools to operate in a LIC environment encompassed in Liberation Theology.

The monograph begins with an examination of Liberation Theology and its relationship with Marxism. Next, Liberation Theology is traced from its mid-1960s origins to its present level of political and military influence in Central America. Five Central American countries, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, are examined to determine their LIC status, the influence of Liberation Theology, and the potential for US involvement. Next, the Army's current LIC doctrine is analyzed and evaluated from its FM 100-5 (Operations) origin, thru FM 100-20 (Military Operations in Low Intensity Conflict), and finally FM 100-2-20 (The Threat in Low Intensity Conflict). Jomini's model for countering an insurgency is used as the evaluation criteria. The result of the analysis was a determination that Army LIC doctrine fails to adequately consider, or provide guidance for, countering a Liberation Theology based insurrection - especially in its most dominant region; Central America.

Finally, recommendations to improve LIC doctrine are suggested. A three tiered approach is proposed. First, FM 100-5 needs to be expanded. Second, FM 100-20 and FM 100-2-20 need to provide more detail on Liberation Theology. The third recommendation, supported by articles from professional journals, is to improve tactical training.

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PART I: INTRODUCTION

The United States has a "wealth of experience" fighting limited wars during the past 200 years including actions against the Barbary pirates in 1804, the Philippines in 1913, and Panama in 1989.¹ Today the doctrinal term for these types of limited wars is "Low Intensity Conflict" (LIC); and its focus is on Central America. This is primarily due to the numerous insurgencies in the region during the past ten years. Additionally, the recent involvement of a US Army advisor to the El Salvadoran Army in the murder of six Jesuit priests has focused national attention on the area.²

The unique interaction of religion and politics in Central America adversely impacts US interest in the region through the doctrine of Liberation Theology.³ Unlike our traditional view of the role of the parish priest, some clergy in Central America are active politically and militarily in the region's revolutionary movements. Liberation Theology therefore adds a religious dimension to the political and military opposition facing our foreign policy in Central America. In that context, Liberation Theology is neither fully understood nor adequately addressed through current military education, doctrine, or training.⁴

Liberation theology justifies revolution as "a last resort against the greater violence of tyrants - an orthodox Catholic teaching that goes back to Saint Thomas

Aquinas." As murdered Bishop Oscar Romero of Nicaragua stated in 1980, "When all peaceful means have been exhausted, the Church considers insurrection moral and justified."⁵ The result is that the church and state are not only separate, but competitors politically, socially, and in accordance with Romero's guidance, militarily. This competition, especially the military aspect, is what complicates LIC in Central America.

The predominance of political objectives at the tactical level makes LIC a unique war-fighting environment for the US soldier. Often in LIC, friends and foes appear the same and in many cases the overwhelming use of armed forces may be counter-productive to achieving both the political and military objectives.⁶ Liberation Theology further complicates these conditions because the church is active politically, while individual priests are active militarily. Therefore, tactical commanders and their soldiers must be prepared to deal with this peculiar aspect of Central American insurgencies.

So what do we teach our soldiers about Liberation Theology and what do they need to know about it to accomplish their mission? Do we train our tactical commanders that LIC involves economic, social, ideological, political, and in the case of Central America, religious dimensions. Do we have one LIC template that all conflicts are supposed to fit into, or have we included in our analysis of Central American⁷ insurgencies the role of Liberation Theology?

An analysis of US doctrine indicates that we have done neither and the cultural predominance of the Catholic Church in Central America, with its ties to Liberation Theology, make it essential that we do. We must train our soldiers to conquer the challenge Liberation Theology presents in the conduct of tactical operations.

Simply stated, this monograph seeks to answer the question: Does the Army's LIC doctrine adequately address or "deal with" the complications of Liberation Theology?

To answer the question this paper is divided into four major sections. First, Liberation Theology is defined with an emphasis on how Marxism has blended with Christianity in Central America. The second section includes an analysis of five Central American countries; Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. The current status of LIC, the potential for future US involvement, and the intensity of Liberation Theology is measured in each country. Panama was purposely omitted from the analysis because of the overwhelming historical involvement of the US and its continuing re-emergence as a democracy as a result of Operation Just Cause. The third section analyzes current Army doctrine as it pertains to Liberation Theology.

The evaluation criteria used in the analysis was a model proposed by Jomini to counter insurgency. Briefly stated, the four steps in Jomini's model are:

1. Troops proportional to the threat.

2. Calm the popular passions.
3. Patience and time. 8
4. Courtesy, gentleness, severity and justice.

The analysis will concentrate on the ability of current doctrine to provide the tactical commander the tools necessary to counter an insurgency with Liberation Theology as its ideological basis. The reader will find, in fact, that the current doctrine is woefully inadequate. The fourth section outlines recommended changes to current LIC doctrine and training.

To appreciate the importance of Liberation Theology in Central America's insurgencies it is first necessary to understand its evolution and how it is applied by the Catholic clergy in the region.

PART II: THE EVOLUTION OF AN IDEOLOGY

Liberation Theology owes its name to the title of a book written in 1971 by Fr. Gustavo Gutierrez of Peru; A
9
Theology of Liberation. The movement is defined

by Rubenstein and Roth in The Politics of Latin American Liberation Theology as, "A theological tendency originat-

ing in Latin America that has inspired and legitimized Christian involvement in radical social and political

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movements." Liberation Theology focuses on three stages

of political action designed to change society. First, there is sociological analysis to identify forms of exploitation and identify the oppressors of the people.

The second phase calls for the exploited masses to be made aware of their abuse - this is called

"conscientisation." The third stage is the action by the oppressed either by political activity, peaceful demonstrations or forming small groups in base communities that may conduct guerrilla warfare.¹¹

Liberation Theology is proclaimed as the solution to "the economic, social, and political problems of the poor."¹² Following the tenants of Liberation Theology the local parish priest moves out of his city home into the shanty towns of the impoverished. He lives with them and is the facilitator that guides them towards the conversion of Catholicism into political action.¹³ What is the driving force behind Liberation Theology that motivates some Central American clergy to openly support revolution or take-up arms?

Two answers provide a possible solution to the question. First is Crane Brinton's conclusion in The Anatomy of Revolution that revolutionaries insist on having their heaven "here, now, on earth." They are impatient and intend to conquer evil "once and for all."¹⁴ In 1962, the Jesuit publication Mensaje warned that the masses were tired of waiting for the promised reforms in society and demanded swift and thorough changes.¹⁵ The second answer involves a belief by Liberation Theologians that the plight of the poor is caused by the developed "Capitalist" countries.

According to Liberation Theology, these rich countries, in concert with the few wealthy land and production owners, will continue to exploit the working

class poor even to the extent of military intervention to¹⁶
ensure their continued economic advantage. Liberation
Theology is the catalyst for the oppressed masses' desire
for immediate change - this also describes the essence of
Marxist ideology. The connection between Marxism and
Liberation Theology is clear. As John Cooper wrote,
"Liberation theologians express a growing awareness that
revolutionary Christians must form a strategic alliance
with Marxist."¹⁷ The obvious tension between the two is
that the traditional view of Marxism is anti-Christian.
To understand how Liberation Theology applies to Marxism
it is necessary to examine how Marx evaluated religion
and Christianity.

Marx viewed the church as an organization that en-
forced the economic and political system which suppressed
the people.¹⁸ The working class had to end its exploi-
tation by terminating the capitalist state.¹⁹ To Marx
revolution was inevitable. Working within the system to
effect the changes he demanded was impossible.
Capitalism could not be defeated "on the terrain of the
capitalist class - and that, by definition involves
revolution."²⁰

In addition to the overthrow of the capitalist
state, Marx called for the overthrow of religion because²¹
God was the highest form of being for man. Religion was
nothing more than an "illusory happiness" that Marx²²
often referred to as the "opium of the masses." To
Marx, religion subordinated man, therefore liberation

could only be attained when man recognized himself, not religion, as the supreme being. Religion had to be abolished for man to attain true freedom. This was the struggle of man - to free himself from anything that subordinated him.²³

The early history of the Catholic Church in Central America exemplified both traits that Marx detested. First it was the essence of a formal religion. Second, it supported the oppression of the people through its political ties to the Iberian aristocracies.

The primary role of the church in colonial Latin America was to legitimize the crown.²⁴ From 1808 to 1824 Latin America broke away from the colonizing powers of Spain and Portugal but the church continued to side with the crown.²⁵ There were exceptions, however. For example, in the early 1800's, Mexican clergymen Fr. Miguel Hidalgo and Fr. Jose Maria Morelos actively fought for "the dispossessed and oppressed." Eventually, and with the approval of the Vatican, the two priests were executed²⁶ for their activities.

As Central America struggled for stability numerous dictatorships, coups and fledgling democracies evolved. The church became the "middle ground" and the only societal constant in each of the countries. Capitalism was the government's economic system of choice and although land owners were getting wealthier the peasants remained poor. As priests and nuns worked at the local

level they became increasingly more disenchanted with their own activities. They subsisted on the contributions of the poor and began to question a system that approved of what they believed to be an unjust social order.²⁷ Phillip Berryman, an outspoken advocate of Liberation Theology, summarized the situation and placed the blame squarely on the government's economic system (capitalism) when he wrote, "People do not simply happen to be poor; their poverty is largely a product of the way society is organized."²⁸ As the clergy continued to question the struggle of the poor two events provided the catalyst for the rise of Liberation Theology in Latin America: Vatican Council II of 1962 -1965 and the Medellin Conference in August 1968.

Liberation Theology's theoretical base began with the second Vatican Council. For the first time the church endorsed attempts to move away from its historical alignment with the middle and upper class of society and expand its efforts toward helping the poor. The council provided a basis for documents on Liberation Theology which would eventually emerge from the Second General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate (CELAM) in Medellin, Columbia in 1968.²⁹

After Vatican II a small group of priests in Argentina formed an organization called "The Movement of Priests for the Third World." Their mission was to educate and mobilize the poor under what they perceived to be a charter of the Vatican II. Similar groups were

formed in Peru, Mexico and Columbia and were effective in
30
working with the poor in the fields and schools.

In August 1967, seven Brazilian bishops authored a letter endorsing the overthrow of government by writing that, "some revolutions have been necessary." The bishops urged Christians to follow socialism "as a form of social life better adapted to our times, more in
31
keeping with the Gospel."

As a result of these groups the Latin American clergy began to organize, write, and teach each other. Just prior to the Medellin meeting opening, 1,000 priests throughout Latin America addressed an open letter to the bishops attending the conference. They stated that the cause of the people's suffering was "the existing
32
political, economic, and social system."

In August 1968, the Second Latin American Bishops Conference was held in Medellin, Columbia to discuss Vatican II's doctrine and form plans to implement its own decisions. The conference produced a report often
33
referred to as the "Magna Carta" for Liberation Theology.

The bishops committed the church to share the conditions of the poor as a sign of solidarity and called for Christians to be involved in the transformation of society. Revolutionaries were defined as those who sought radical change and who believed that people should
34
determine their own future. One of the major recommendations of the conference was the drive "for people to create and develop their own grass-roots

organizations for the redress and consolidation of their
rights and the search for true justice." From this
concept evolved the "Cummunidades Eclesiales de Base" or
Christian Based Community (CBC).

Some suggested that CBCs should be the building
blocks on which the parish should be built. The network
of CBCs would be organized by priests and nuns who would
act as trainers, facilitators, and spiritual guides.
Although the theory may have been non-revolutionary the
system was soon overtaken by Liberation Theologians who
utilized the network to spread their ideology to the
masses.

As a result of the social reordering of the church's
priorities it quickly became a "quasi-official" social
instrument of the peasants in Latin America. The
Catholic Church attempted to change its image from an
institutional bureaucracy to a people's church by three
actions. First, mass was allowed to be said in the local
language. Second, human rights and social problems were
considered "major issues" by the church requiring action.
Third, the church began to interpret God's work through
"human progress." The church now evaluated its success
by the improvement in the plight of the poor and
oppressed.

By the end of the Medellin conference everything was
in place for the growth of Liberation Theology. Fr.
Gustavo Gutierrez, the recognized founder and leading
writer of Liberation Theology, believed that change must

come quickly and can only be achieved through revolution. In his opinion the situation called for radical change of the social and economic structure if the oppressed were to be free.³⁹ He called for the abolition of the private ownership of capitalism because it led to "the exploitation of man by men."⁴⁰

Gutierrez and his fellow Liberation Theologians viewed the new role of the church as committing itself to social justice, to raising the consciousness of the masses, and making them aware of the abuses that they suffered. Finally, they preached the need to unite in order to change the political system.⁴¹ They determined that the root cause of Central American poverty was the exploitation by the developed countries; and since these countries were capitalist, then capitalism was to blame.⁴²

The union of Marxism and Catholicism in Liberation Theology came at this point. Fr. Gutierrez argued that Marx didn't invent the class struggle, but instead analyzed the cause and demonstrated how it could lead to a classless society. Fr. Gutierrez believed that the Liberation Theologian has a duty to make the working class aware of the class struggle and their need to take part in it.⁴³ Unlike the early ideological conflict dividing Christianity and Marxism, through the act of revolution they were freed. Its result is the end of capitalism which opens new doors for the church under socialism. In other words, there must be revolution - for to accept the status quo is to accept the dominance

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of capitalism over the world. Are Liberation Theologians then "Marxist in clerical clothing?" Donald Davidson writing in Parameters believes the answer is definitely "yes." He cites Fr. Ernesto Cardenal's description of himself as a "Marxist, a follower of Christ, and a
45
revolutionary" as a prime example.

At this point it is clear that Liberation Theology's roots come from an untraditional partner - Marxism. The political and economic conditions in Central America make the area easily susceptible to Liberation Theology. Vatican II and the Medellin Conference firmly inplaced an awareness of the plight of the poor and institutionalized CBCs as a simple way to recruit and spread revolution in the region.

PART III: LIBERATION THEOLOGY IN CENTRAL AMERICA

The intensity of Liberation Theology currently in Central America is often proportional to the historical role played by the Catholic Church in each of the individual countries. Each country started with almost identical roots and they share many similarities. Yet, Liberation Theology is more active in Nicaragua and El Salvador than Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Honduras. Differences can be explained by this analysis of each country's past. Projections for Liberation Theology inspired low intensity conflicts of the future can also be determined.

COSTA RICA

Costa Rica joined with the other countries of the Central American region with a declaration of independence from Spain in 1821.⁴⁶ The country has remained somewhat politically stable throughout the 20th century except for two revolts in 1917-1919 and 1948.⁴⁷ Democratically elected governments, although socialist in political ideology, have predominated Costa Rica politics for the last 22 years.⁴⁸ As with most of its neighboring Central American countries Costa Rica has seen its political stability directly linked with its economic capabilities. In 1988 internal unrest became more open as workers mobilized in protest to President Arias' austerity policies. The 1990 election, in which 80% of the people voted, was fueled by the implication of drug trafficking by government officials and resulted in the election of Rafael Angel Calderon Fournier, a Christian-socialist, as president.⁴⁹ President Calderon instituted a two year austerity program in an attempt to maintain an economic growth rate similar to the 1980s.⁵⁰

Costa Rica is the most stable country in Central America and the possibility of an insurrection is minimal.⁵¹ The country has been able to maintain its official position of neutrality since its declaration in November 1983. To demonstrate its neutrality in 1986, Costa Rica established a full-time commission to secure its northern boarder with Nicaragua and eliminated Contra activity in the country by closing down airstrips,

52

hospitals and staging bases.

Costa Rica continues to act as a model for US efforts to build stability in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala.⁵³ President Calderon's policies are attempting⁵⁴ to integrate Costa Rica into the world economy. If he is successful the country should remain politically stable and its position of neutrality uncompromised.

Liberation Theology failed to gain a foothold in Costa Rica. Phillip Berryman admitted the movement had no base in Costa Rica because, "the mechanism of formal⁵⁵ democracy remains ..." Although two guerilla groups are active in Costa Rica, the Ejercito del Pueblo Costarricense (EPC) and the Patria y Libertad, the country has shown a remarkable ability to solve internal problems through free and democratic elections. It is unlikely there will be any near-future involvement in⁵⁶ Costa Rica by US forces.

EL SALVADOR

El Salvador is one of the countries in Central America where Liberation Theology has been most active. El Salvador achieved its independence from Spain in 1839 and from the time of its initial independence to the present the country has been plagued by coups, revolution, and recently a 10 year insurrection that⁵⁷ continues to threaten its fragile democracy. In 1969 war broke out with Honduras as a result of animosities over a soccer game. The Organization of American States (OAS)

intervened and arranged a cease fire and withdrawal of El
58
Salvadoran soldiers after four days.

In 1980, under mounting pressure from the US, the
military junta installed Jose Napoleon Duarte as the
59
first civilian head of state since 1931. 1980 also saw
the organization of the left-wing guerrilla group whose
goal was the pursuit of its political aims through
violence - the Frente Farabundo Marti de Liberacion
Nacional (FMLN). The civil war which ensued with the
formation of the FMLN resulted in over 70,000 casualties
from 1980-1989.

In 1989 Alfredo Cristiani was elected president and
60
continues to fight a civil war against the FMLN. The
recent peace initiatives by the United Nations to
negotiate a cease fire between the government and the
61
FMLN have only been marginally successful.

The murder of Archbishop Oscar Romero in 1980, the
rape-murder of American nuns the same year, and execution
of six Jesuit priests in 1989 thrust Liberation Theology
into the forefront of the civil war in El Salvador,
62
even though it was active for over a decade. Fr. Jose
Alas started forming CBCs in El Salvador in 1968. Within
one year there were 32 CBCs from which he helped organize
the FAPU, a political organization which represented a
direct link between the church in El Salvador and the
63
revolution.

Charges by the church of military death squads were
countered by the government with charges of participation

by the clergy in armed insurrection; such as the government's claim that priests were involved in the 1989⁶⁴ attack on the Armed Forces General Command. In fact, President Cristiani is struggling to maintain control over a military that views the clergy as a major supporter of the insurrection. There is merit in the military's position. For example, in 1986 the FMLN was responsible for over 1.0 billion dollars worth of damage to the El Salvadoran infrastructure and Liberation Theology must assume a portion of the responsibility as⁶⁵ an ideology which supports and promotes the insurrection.

The potential for increased U.S. involvement in El Salvador is linked to the current peace initiative. If a cease-fire and subsequent negotiations lead to peace then US military involvement will be minimal.

A possible scenario that may result in additional US military action could come as a result of increased FMLN activity and possible collapse of the Cristiani government. The President may decide that security and stability in El Salvador is in our national interest and deploy combat forces to help defeat the FMLN and rebuild the nation. If that option evolves, Liberation Theology and the Catholic Church will be major actors and possible adversaries.

GUATEMALA

Guatemala gained its independence in 1823 after two years of occupation by Mexico. From 1839-1849, Rafael Carrera's conservative government consolidated the power

of the ruling class and restored the dominant position
66
of the Catholic Church. His presidency was followed by a
series of dictatorships interspersed with short durations
of constitutional government and anarchy.

The ten years between 1944-1954 were highlighted by
agrarian reform when the government eliminated private
land holdings and distributed them to the poor. In 1954
Col. Carlos Casrillo Armas led a US backed coup against
the government which was viewed as a communist threat to
67
the region.

The 1970s and '80s were decades of political
terrorism as labor and political leaders were killed and
several foreign diplomats were murdered. In February
1982 the leading guerrilla groups united and formed the
Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemaletca (URNG). They
declared they would continue to oppose the government and
68
fight for revolutionary change in Guatemala.

As a result of pressure from the US Congress to
withhold economic aid the military allowed free
69
elections in 1986. Vinico Cerezo was elected president
and immediately began to try to establish a functional
government while appeasing the military, eradicate
guerrilla activity, solve the country's economic
problems, and restore the country's tarnished image in
70
the world community.

By 1989 guerrilla activity failed to diminish. In
May 1990, the US recalled its ambassador in protest to a
combination of perceived human rights violations and the

failure of the government to control right-wing
71
extremist.

The rise of Liberation Theology in Guatemala received its momentum from the Maryknoll's Cursillos de Capacitacion. This program began with the approval of the dictatorship as an anti-communist program but provided experiences to the priests and nuns that "transformed them into revolutionaries with a profound
72
sense of class struggle." By the mid-1980s the clergy was politically active and perceived as a threat by the government. Two priests were reportedly murdered and a
73
bishop ambushed during this same time. Although Liberation Theology failed to gain the same popular support as in El Salvador and Nicaragua, reports in 1988 indicated a "reawakening" of social concerns and
74
speaking out by the bishops of Guatemala.

The possibility of the US becoming involved in the insurgency in Guatemala is minimal. Although the guerrillas have been successful in disrupting some of the country's infrastructure the government of President Cerezo remains dominant - at the leisure of the
75
military. Guatemala has remained one of the least involved countries in Central American conflicts and all indications are that it will remain that way.

HONDURAS

Mark Falcoff, in his 1988 article "Making Central America Safe for Communism," states that Honduras is
76
Central America's poorest and most backward republic.

Honduras has struggled to secure economic, political, and social stability since it gained independence from Spain in 1821, but it has met with little success.⁷⁷

From 1932 to 1980 the country experienced two dictatorships and five military coups. In 1980 the military succumbed to US pressure for free elections, which resulted in the presidency of the Liberal Party leader, Roberto Suarzo Cordona. The 1986 presidential elections resulted in Jose Azcona's election. This was the first time in 55 years that freely elected governments followed each other.⁷⁸

On 27 January 1990, President Rafael Leonardo Callejas was sworn-in as Honduras' third consecutive freely elected president.⁷⁹ Even with the free election of the president the military continues to control most of Honduras' governmental decisions. As one Honduras colonel responded after rejecting President Callejas' request for a visitor to enter the country, "He's only the President."⁸⁰

Honduras' experience with LIC centers around its struggle with Nicaragua in the 1980s. Confrontations with Nicaragua began in 1980 with Contra bases in Honduras. In 1980 and 1981 Nicaraguan forces crossed Honduras' border to destroy Contra bases and small scale clashes resulted.

In April 1988, 32,000 US soldiers deployed to Honduras to support the government's attempt to counter Nicaraguan cross boarder operations.⁸¹ As the rule of the

Sandinistas in Nicaragua ended and the Contras disbanded, Honduras focused its attention against its largest organized guerrilla group, the Directorio Nacional Unido⁸² (DNU).

The potential for continued US involvement in Honduras is obvious. Since the early 1980s the US, especially the Army, has had a major role in the country. The US made maximum use of Honduras' geographic location to support the Contras and in 1983 opened a training school for Honduras and El Salvadoran soldiers. In 1986 there were 1,500 US soldiers permanently stationed in Honduras as part of JTF-B and by 1987 the number of US soldiers in country rose to 9,700. In 1988 riots against US presence were caused when US forces arrested a Honduras national suspected of drug trafficking. In addition, US installations and soldiers have been⁸³ attacked by the DNU every year since 1988. The possibility of an expanded role for the US in Honduras may be linked to counter-guerrilla operations to stabilize the Honduran government and thus secure a US presence (JTF-B) in the geographical center of Central America.

The role of Liberation Theology in Honduras has been minimal. In the early 1970s Fr. J. Guadalupe Carney began to organize CBCs in Honduras. Fr. Carney was a US citizen who fought in WWII and later became a Jesuit priest. By 1973 he spoke out against the Jesuit's teaching school to the "ruling class" in Honduras and he

began to view Marxism and Christianity as compatible. Fr. Carney was exiled from Honduras even though he became a naturalized citizen. After several years working in northern Nicaragua he reentered Honduras in 1983 and died while operating with armed guerrillas.⁸⁴ The ability of Liberation Theology to rise in Honduras is minimal. The church participates little in Honduran political and social activities due to the domination of the military. As a result there is little change expected in the future.

NICARAGUA

In 1838 Nicaragua gained its independence and organized under a constitution. For more than three decades the US influenced Nicaragua's internal political structure. US military intervention began in 1912 when U.S. Marines landed and administered the country. In 1926, with the threat of revolt growing, the Marines returned and fought the guerillas to a stalemate the following year. In 1933 President Roosevelt withdrew the Marines as part of the "Good Neighbor" policy.

The events which resulted in the eventual Sandinista revolution and rise to power began in 1935 with the overthrow of President Juan Bautista by the head of the National Guard, Anastasio Somoza Garcia. Somoza assumed the presidency in 1937, was assassinated in 1956, and his son, Luis Somoza, followed him to power.

In 1961 the Nicaraguan insurgents organized as the Sandinista National Liberation Front (Frente Sandinista

de Liberacion National - FSLN). In 1975, Somoza responded to increased guerrilla threats with a declaration of a nationwide state of emergency. By May 1979 the FSLN changed its tactics from guerrilla warfare to a full scale conventional military operations which
85
drove Somoza from Nicaragua.

The 1979 revolution was the most broad-based and popularly supported insurrection in the history of Latin
86
America. Former National Guard and Somoza supporters formed an anti-Sandinista movement and with the backing of the US began to operate from Honduras and El Salvador. The government gained widespread initial support for its programs to rebuild Nicaragua economically and politically, but after years of oppression and dissatisfaction, Daniel Ortega and his Sandinista Party
87
were voted out of office on 25 February 1990.

President Violeta Chamorro's presidency is unstable and continues to strive for economic and social progress in the country. Her task is to, "keep her promise to dismantle the Sandinista state without provoking the Sandinistas, who still control the armed forces and police and remain the largest organized party in the
88
country." The Catholic Church, which had such a predominant role in the rise of the Sandinistas to power, has been relatively quiet up to now.

Liberation Theology's roots in Nicaragua began when Fr. Ernesto Cardenal and Fr. Uriel Molina founded the first CBCs in Nicaragua in the late '60s and early

'70s. The CBCs in Managua grew to become some of the most politically active and major recruiting bases for the Sandinistas. One Sandinista organizer even referred to the CBCs as "quarries." Priests such as Miguel Bachman, Edgar Parrales, Fenando Cardenal, and his brother Ernesto Cardenal openly joined the FSLN and played a major role in the government after the fall of Somoza.

The possibility of US involvement in Nicaragua is linked to the stability of the Chamorro presidency. Would the US intervene in Nicaragua in response to a Sandinista coup? Our actions in Panama and Grenada lead to an answer of "yes."

This analysis of Central America demonstrates that the US may get directly involved in three of the five nations discussed. The Army is already involved in two; El Salvador and Honduras. To accomplish the mission our soldiers will be facing they must be trained to operate in an environment where they understand that Liberation Theology is the ideological base of the insurrection. The Army's LIC doctrine will be the key to the success, but the doctrine fails to adequately address Liberation Theology.

PART IV: LIC DOCTRINE AND LIBERATION THEOLOGY

The analysis of the five Central American countries and their struggle for independence has highlighted two major factors. First, each country has attempted to

combat its insurgency through the application of military force that the majority of time has inflicted enormous casualties on the civilian population. Part of the problem is the difficulty distinguishing between guerrilla and civilian. Whatever the reason, the result has been to alienate a large portion of the population and support the insurgent's claims that the current government is oppressive. The second point is that Liberation Theology has been a major actor in the insurgencies in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Honduras and to a lesser extent in Costa Rica and Guatemala. Adding to the destabilization of the region, and thus increasing the potential for US involvement, are two unresolved territorial and security issues between Nicaragua and Honduras, and Honduras and El Salvador. If US forces are introduced into Central America, will they face the same problems as the host government? Yes, unless the Army incorporates Liberation Theology into its doctrine and training. Jomini provides a starting point for the analysis of the current doctrine that a tactical commander deployed to Central America would rely upon to form training plans and conduct operations.

Antoine Henri Jomini may have experienced Liberation Theology long before Central America claimed it as a birthplace. Jomini's extensive work with the French Army gave him the experience of fighting in Spain and Portugal where the Catholic Church maintained a power base similar to that of Central America. He acknowledged

the power of religion as a motivating force when he wrote, "for it excites the ardor of the people, and often
93
creates a closely-knit party."

Jomini recognized the utility of religion as a dogma but he also witnessed its ability to mobilize simple people, people usually not viewed as combatants, to fight in violent means. He saw the blending of guerrilla warfare with what may be seen as Liberation Theology when he wrote of his experiences in the Iberian Peninsula:

I acknowledge that my prejudices are in favor of the good old times when the French and English Guards courteously invited each other to fire first - as at Fontenoy - preferring them to the frightful epoch when priests, women, and children throughout Spain plotted the murder of isolated soldiers. (94)

To attack the problem of an insurrection Jomini recommended four steps. These may be consider Jomini's model for fighting a counter-insurgency:

1. Make a display of a mass of troops proportioned to the obstacles and resistance likely to be encountered.
2. Calm the popular passions in every way.
3. Exhaust them by time and patience.
4. Display courtesy, gentleness, and severity, and (particularly) deal justly. (95)

To counter a Liberation Theology based insurgency in Central America the tactical commander will train his soldiers and lead them in accordance with Army doctrine. Three publications form the basis for LIC doctrine. FM 100-5, "Operations," is the Army's capstone warfighting manual. FM 100-20, "Military Operations in Low Intensity Conflict," is the Army's basic doctrinal manual for LIC. The third publication, FM 100-2-20, "The Threat in Low

Intensity Conflict," provides regional data, expands information on insurgency and counter-insurgency operations and, although a draft manual, will become part of doctrine upon its final approval. Those manuals considered, does our current doctrine adequately deal with Liberation Theology and provide the tactical commander a foundation for success? The answer is "no."

LIC is discussed in seven paragraphs in FM 100-5. LIC "is the conflict environment in which the US has been most engaged since WWII, and that is the most likely threat environment of the future." ⁹⁶ Given this future involvement, the manual's seven paragraphs are inadequate to convey to the tactical commander the increasing possibility of our fighting in the LIC environment. Although it indirectly complies with Jomini's fourth step by calling for "restraint in the execution of military operation,"(sic) it fails to adequately address any ideological basis of support for insurgencies which lead ⁹⁷ to LIC. This is an error that must be corrected in order to provide the tactical commander an understanding of the conflict in which he is involved. Since the capstone manual provides little guidance, the tactical commander's next step would be to reference the Army's publication completely devoted to military operations in LIC.

The Army's doctrine for LIC is published in FM 100-20, Military Operations in Low Intensity Conflict. The manual defines LIC as:

a political-military confrontation

between contending states or groups below conventional warfare and above routine peaceful competition among states. It frequently involves protracted struggles of competing principles and ideologies. LIC ranges from subversion to the use of armed force. It is waged by a combination of means, employing political, economic, informational, and military instruments. (98)

FM 100-20's explanation of LIC highlights four areas that are strikingly similar with Liberation Theology in Central America. First, the conflicts in Central America have been a protracted struggle. For example, the insurrection in El Salvador has been sustained by the activities of the clergy for over ten years. The overthrow of Somoza in Nicaragua began almost 20 years before the victory of the Sandinistas. Second, these struggles are of competing ideologies. In simplest terms they are struggles of Democracy and Capitalism against Liberation Theology and Marxism. Many believe that these struggles can only be resolved through revolution. Richard Rubenstein, co-editor of The Politics of Latin American Liberation Theology, describes the reason for the confrontation:

If, as Marxist theoreticians claim, capitalist development fosters Third World underdevelopment, the poverty and misery of Latin America's masses will not be overcome by political or economic reforms which leave the present system more or less intact. (99)

Third, the conflicts in Central America have different characteristics. They range from the subversion witnessed in Guatemala and Honduras to the use of well-equipped forces in El Salvador and Nicaragua. The

fourth point of similarity is that the Liberation Theology in Central America has been very successful in the application of political, economic, informational, and military means; especially in El Salvador and Nicaragua.

Although the manual provides numerous generalities that correspond to insurgencies in Central America it is deficient in its analysis of ideology. Chapter 2, FM 100-20 states, "Unfortunately for the analyst, insurgents are not likely to describe their ideology in specific detail." This is not the case concerning Liberation Theology in Central America. The problem with the manual's discussion of ideology centers on the last sentence in the four paragraphs the manual dedicates to the subject; "In addition, the analyst's own cultural bias may make it difficult for him to distinguish statements of ideology and strategic objectives from ¹⁰⁰propaganda." Our Western cultural bias makes it difficult to link religion with an insurgency. The result is a failure to strike at one of the major ideological bases of Central American insurgencies - Liberation Theology. This ideological inadequacy additionally highlights the tactical deficiency of the manual.

FM 100-20 provides little guidance to the tactical commander for the conduct of operations. For example, "Tactical operations by US forces against insurgents will be an unusual occurrence resulting from unique

experiences." The manual assumes that LIC operations will be conducted primarily by Special Operations Forces (SOF). Operations in Grenada and Panama have shown this "unusual occurrence" isn't quite as unique as described in the manual.

Appendix E of FM 100-20, "A guide to Counterinsurgency Operations," centers on the Internal Defense and Development (IDAD) concept. The four principles of this concept (Unity of effort; Maximum use of intelligence; Minimum use of violence; and a Responsive government) have some similarities to Jomini's model, but it is incomplete because the concept focuses on the host nation government and does not provide a methodology for a tactical commander. ¹⁰² Even the section entitled "Security Force Planning and Operations" continues to focus on host nation actions. There must be a focus for the tactical commander. Ideally, that focus may be found in the Army's manual that analyzes the LIC threat.

FM 100-2-20, "The Threat in Low Intensity Conflict (Coordinating Draft)," identifies potential conflict areas in Southern Command's (SOUTHCOM's) Area of responsibility (AOR) from 1990-2020 . Included in its analysis are internal conflicts in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala. According to the manual these conflicts will resemble guerrilla warfare and insurgency activities similar to earlier phases of the FMLN activities in El

Salvador. Unfortunately, the manual provides inadequate linkage between Liberation Theology and Central American insurgencies.

FM 100-2-20 (Coordinating Draft), only has a small section which defines Liberation Theology as:

radical wings of the Roman Catholic Church and Protestant denominations, who espouse a new day for the poor they serve, have supported revolutionaries in their struggle for classless societies. This approach, referred to as Liberation Theology, is growing in frequency, especially in Latin America and the Philippines. Priests, nuns, ministers, and lay people are apparently agreeing with revolutionaries that armed struggle is necessary to relieve suffering in the developed world. (104)

Although this explanation provides the Army a definition of Liberation Theology, it inadequately describes the strength of the ideology or its' presence in Africa and Asia. It fails to account for the linkage of Liberation Theology with Marxism, fails to discuss the organizational structure of the movement (CBCs), and "side steps" the issue of priests and other clergy actively participating in the insurgencies. Compounding this problem is that Chapter 8 (Trends in LIC Threats), describes insurgencies in Latin America in only two sentences; neither of which mentions Liberation Theology as a base of ideological support. The manual does not provide the tactical commander any specific guidance for countering the ideology. If US combat forces are introduced into these conflicts the Army's training, in accordance with its doctrine, will be the key to success

- and our doctrine is severely lacking in specific guidance. The recommendations which follow do not suggest rewriting LIC doctrine, but modifying it. Fortunately, several articles in professional journals indicate that officers have been working toward that end.

PART V: RECOMMENDED CHANGES TO LIC DOCTRINE

LIC doctrine does not require wholesale changes, but rather modifications to the current publications and training focus. The tactical commander requires sufficient information on Liberation Theology to initiate a training plan that will lead to successful mission execution in Central America. A three-tiered approach is suggested.

First, modify the capstone manual, FM 100-5, to include Jomini's model as a method of defeating an insurgency. Second, expand both FM 100-20 and FM 100-2-20 to include detailed discussions of Liberation Theology. Third, provide aggressive training for tactical units. This training should focus on specific actions, based on Jomini's model, to defeat a Liberation Theology based insurrection. Soldiers will look for guidance first from their army's doctrine.

It is essential that the Army's capstone manual, FM 100-5, include more detail on LIC. Jomini's model provides excellent methodology for "up front" guidance and gives the tactical commander a head start on formulating his training plan. Since FM 100-5 is a

capstone manual, specific details for countering Liberation Theology should be incorporated in FM 100-20, the Army's primary low intensity conflict operations manual.

LIC doctrine's starting point is its solid foundation in the laws of land warfare. This foundation has many similarities to Jomini's model that can easily be incorporated into the FM 100-20. The laws of land warfare, combined with Jomini's model, provide a methodology for countering an insurgency; in this case Liberation Theology in Central America. The manual must focus more on defeating an insurgency at the ideological base of support. The current manual lacks specific guidance - Jomini's model offers specific action.

An expanded analysis of insurgency in FM 100-20 should include Jomini's four step model. In accordance with Jomini's model, the discussion should first include the display of US troops which must be proportional to the threat. For most countries the introduction of US combat forces is the last measure to secure survival of the threatened regime. Foreign soldiers, especially the appearance of US forces in Central America, compounds the legitimacy problem of the host government. LTC Rudolph Barnes' May 1990 Military Review article, "The Diplomat Warrior," linked the need for tight control of the US forces with legitimacy by writing that US forces, "must meet a difficult double test of legitimacy; they must contribute to the political legitimacy of supported

forces and also be legitimate by US standards." The host
government must convince key political groups that its
policies are reasonable and the use of its own and
outside troops will be tightly controlled. Although the
commander will deploy with sufficient forces to secure
his unit's personnel and equipment and accomplish
assigned missions it will still be the responsibility of
the host nation to bear the burden to "ultimately defeat
the insurgency and eliminate the internal conditions
which bred it."

FM 100-20 must additionally include the linkage of
Jomini's second step with Special Operations Forces (SOF)
and conventional tactical units. Jomini called for
calming the popular passions and exhausting them. This
will be conducted by the host nation forces under the
supervision of US units. One dimension of this step is
that special operations forces such as psychological
operations (PSYOPS) and Special Forces (SF) "share
leading roles" with Civil Affairs (CA) in LIC.

Conventional tactical forces execute Jomini's
second step by isolating the CBCs from the
revolutionaries (Liberation Theologians). A conventional
war requires a nation's support to maintain the
industrial and political base. Today it is not necessary
for an insurgency to maintain mass support. Small groups,
expanding on an abundance of internal problems, can
generate enough violence to destroy some Central American

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governments. To eliminate Liberation Theology's base of support a major objective must be isolation of the theologians from the CBCs. This becomes the primary focus of conventional forces in step two. Melissa Barnes' 1989 CLIC Papers article summarized the importance of the CBCs to Liberation Theology and the need to isolate the communities from the insurgents. Her paper, "Liberation Theology in Central America," highlights the impact of the CBC on the citizen, "Their political ideas will be shaped by Marxist preachers, and, therefore, the peasants will never know the options of
112
more democratic ideas."

The key to defeating a Liberation Theology inspired insurgency in Central America will be to incorporate Jomini's third and fourth points into all actions both by US and host nation forces. Years of alleged human rights violations, death squads, and in particular, the execution of priests and nuns have aided the insurgents' claim that the government is oppressive. Patient action, combined with courtesy, gentleness, justice, and prosecution of convicted insurgents within the fullest extent of the law (Jomini's "severity") can do more to reverse decades of hostility by the military and eliminate the insurgents base of support than any sum of money. To guard against its negative image, host nation armies "must be schooled in human rights doctrine and
113
capable of enforcing it in their force." As LTC Jimmie

Holt's March 1990 article in Military Review outlined,
"Such a strategy would in effect attack the guerrillas
from the rear and transfer the advantages of better
intelligence, surprise and total initiative to the
government army."¹¹⁴

For US combat forces the laws of land warfare and US
policies must specifically address Jomini's third and
fourth steps of patient action while displaying courtesy,
gentleness, severity and justice. The utility of the
suggested additions to FM 100-20 is that it provides a
specific methodology for defeating a Liberation Theology
inspired insurgency. Additionally, FM 100-2-20 should be
expanded to discuss the role of the clergy as a possible
threat in low intensity conflicts.

Applying the laws of land warfare to LIC signals an
escalation of hostilities from "simply sporadic criminal
violence" to combat.¹¹⁵ Unfortunately, once this is done
the insurgents gain a degree of legitimacy as an
organized force. This assists their propaganda campaign
in that the guerrillas, as Phillip Berryman notes, are
now considered legitimate combatants, not 'criminals' or
'terrorist.'¹¹⁶

Liberation Theology provides an additional problem
for US forces because it involves the clergy as active
members of the insurgency. Priests, such as Fr. Cardenal
of El Salvador in 1977, forfeit their status as a
combatant in attacking government installations because
they fail to follow the laws of recognition as a

belligerent. In this case, they are considered common criminals and are not entitled to treatment as prisoners of war. As a result, they may be tried and sentenced to execution or imprisonment.¹¹⁷ If he preaches insurrection and revolution on Sunday what is his status?

The law of war states that ministers shall be permitted to, "give spiritual assistance to the members of their religious communities."¹¹⁸ The law also states that aiding the enemy is, "applicable to all persons whether subject to military law or not and without regard to citizenship or military or civil status."¹¹⁹ Since CBCs have been the "quarries" for Liberation Theology, allowing unconstrained access would be tactically unsound. Priests and other clergy who profess Liberation Theology attempt to utilize the Western perception of a noncombatant's immunity while simultaneously acting in a manner that undermines the same immunity.¹²⁰ Additionally, in some cases the movement of religious personnel may be restricted to prevent their acquisition of information.¹²¹ But the tactical commander must be aware of the political consequences of restricting the movement of or detaining clergy in their own country. As LTC Barnes noted in his article, "diplomacy is essential to achieve politico-military objectives."¹²²

Liberation Theology in Central America will present challenges requiring leaders down to the lowest level that are trained to recognize the interface between social, political, economic and military elements.¹²³

Several authors in professional journals have identified the need for increased LIC training along these lines and their efforts can form the basis for improvements.

LTC William Anderson's 1989 article in the Marine Corps Gazette focused on LIC training deficiencies. He stated, "Historically, conventional forces have had difficulty dealing with unconventional opponents or suspected supporters who have been captured or detained (e.g. My Lai), LIC operations require special training."¹²⁴

LTC Holt's article, entitled, "LIC in Central America: Training Implications for the US Army," offers a starting point. He identified two elements in building a LIC training strategy.¹²⁵ These two points can be used by a tactical commander fighting a Liberation Theology based insurrection in Central America.

First, the tactical commander must understand the nature of the conflict as well as the relationship to US objectives.¹²⁶ We have embarked on a "nation-building" strategy to defeat insurgencies by mobilizing military, economic, political, and social assistance to requesting nations.¹²⁷ Only through understanding this objective can the tactical commander train his force to conduct missions that support operational and strategic plans which accomplish the required end-state.

The second element in LTC Holt's plan is the necessity for every leader to be familiar with the guerrilla mind-set and the basics of what constitutes his

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will to fight. The guerrilla's mind-set is to fight a protracted war, disrupting the country's infrastructure, and discrediting the local government as weak and ineffective. His will to fight is based on political ambition and revolution that is supported by Liberation Theology's integration with Marxism's promised freedom of the oppressed masses. It is essential that the tactical commander understand the motives as well as the objectives of the insurgent in order to predict his

129
behavior. Utilizing LTC Holt's two elements, the tactical unit commander can incorporate Jomini's model for defeating the insurgency.

If the SOUTHCOM assessment is correct, it is possible combat forces will be applied in Central America before the year 2020. The Army's current LIC doctrine provides a basic framework to train our soldiers. It must, however, be expanded to include training for a specific threat in Central America that utilizes Liberation Theology as its ideological base.

PART VI: CONCLUSION

Liberation Theology is more than just the ideological component of the insurgencies in Central America. It represents the church in its historical position as the vehicle for facilitating change. Without the church there would be no Liberation Theology, and without Liberation Theology, Marxism would have been

unable to spread through Central America as rapidly as it
130
has.

The church in Central America stands at a cross-roads in its history. During its turbulent history, the region traditionally maintained neutrality as dictatorships evolved and elected governments dissolved. In the 1960s a small group of priests began to write about the repressive governments and suffering of the people and called for change. By the 1970s Liberation Theology had evolved into an ideology that combined Christianity and Marxism into revolutionary effort throughout the region including its victory in Nicaragua. The church's position in the 1990s will depend on its accompanying "the Latin American people" and "may well determine whether it becomes a marginal or a potent force
131
in the Latin American society of the future."

The tactical commander faces an enormous challenge in Central America. LIC doctrine, although providing a framework for conducting operations, attempts to "template" all insurgencies into a mold that Liberation Theology does not fit. The tactical commander cannot "push the problem into the shape of the template, rather
132
than cut the template to fit the problem." A possible solution may be to utilize Jomini's model.

Jomini proposed a model to defeat an insurgency that could be adapted by a tactical commander to Liberation Theology in a LIC environment. His model has four steps which are designed to eliminate the ideological base of

support as the means of defeating the insurgency. The key step in the process is the ability of the military force to diplomatically control the population. Jomini's model requires leaders that understands not only the political, economic, military, and social situation in Central America but also the influence of the church in the region.

The demise of Marxism, especially as we are currently witnessing in the Soviet Union, does not signal the end of Liberation Theology for two major reasons. First, dissatisfaction with the status-quo in Central America continues. Second, the capability to organize still exists as CBCs and the traditional church structure remain functional organizations.¹³³

Although the official position of the Catholic Church has been a rejection of the political and military aspects of Liberation Theology, the activist members of the clergy, according to Rubenstein, "are not likely to be permanently deterred by anything the Vatican says or does."¹³⁴ The number of priests and other clergy that have joined the guerrillas in the last 20 years has been relatively minor considering the total population, but what is most important, especially to the tactical commander, is the willingness of this small group of clergy, these "shepherds of the flock," to die for¹³⁵ Liberation Theology.

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84. Information concerning Fr. Craney was summarized from Kearney, pp. 90-93.
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